

Public Involvement Plan

Colorado Springs-Fountain Coalition Brownfields Initiative

Coalition Partners

City of Colorado Springs

City of Fountain

Colorado Springs Utilities

Colorado Springs School District 11



Project Contacts:

Aaron Egbert, City of Colorado Springs

Chelsea Gaylord, City of Colorado Springs

Kimberly Bailey, City of Fountain

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Colorado Springs (Grantee) has formed a coalition with the City of Fountain, Colorado Springs Utilities and Colorado Springs School District 11 (the “Coalition”) to revitalize brownfields along the Shooks Run Creek Corridor and Fountain Creek Corridor. EPA defines brownfields as properties where redevelopment is complicated by known or suspected contamination. The Coalition submitted a successful application for a Fiscal Year 2019 US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant.

1.1 Document Purpose

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan is to document goals, tools, and approaches to conducting stakeholder and community outreach during this grant-funded project.

1.2 Project Background

The Coalition has been awarded a \$600K U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant for brownfield revitalization primarily in the Shooks Run Creek Corridor and the downstream Fountain Creek Corridor. The 4-mile Shooks Run Corridor is planned as the final segment of the landmark 10-mile Legacy Loop Greenway that rings downtown Colorado Springs, connecting a regional web of creeks and trails. The Loop’s transformational potential is evident in the vibrant parks, neighborhoods, and up-and-coming economies along its completed sections. However, brownfields blight the Shooks Run Corridor, isolating it from downtown Colorado Springs and impacting the surrounding low-income and minority neighborhoods. In 2015, the City embarked on Envision Shooks Run--a community-driven plan to breathe new life into the Corridor. EPA brownfield grant funds along with local funding tools and development incentives will help the Coalition revitalize the Shooks Run Corridor.

The Fountain Creek Corridor located in the City of Fountain, downstream of Shooks Run, is also a focus area for the grant-funded efforts. The City of Fountain plans to prioritize brownfield revitalization in the US Highway 85 (US85) Urban Renewal Area (URA), which consists of the Gateway Improvement and the Olde Town sub-districts. The 83-acre Fountain Creek Bank site is also a high redevelopment priority because it is an underutilized commercial area located between Fountain Creek, US85, and Fountain Creek Regional Park. The sites within these focus areas are characterized by decades of mixed-material manufacturing use, heavy fleet and automotive repair operations, and haphazard outdoor storage.

1.3 Project Description

The Coalition will use grant funds to build a comprehensive brownfields program to engage the community, prioritize revitalization opportunities, perform environmental assessments, and conduct planning for cleanup and reuse opportunities. Engagement with and participation of landowners will be completely voluntary and will proceed only with expressed written permission of landowners.

The Coalition will focus grant-funded efforts along the Shooks Run Creek Corridor and the Fountain Creek Corridor. These areas have tremendous regional revitalization potential. Brownfield redevelopment is a critical step towards addressing blight throughout the focus areas; to catalyze economic, environmental, neighborhood stability, and public health improvements.

The project will include assessment activities at identified priority brownfield sites in the targeted communities including:

- an estimated 20 Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs);
- an estimated 12 Phase II ESAs which may include regulated building materials surveys; and,
- clean-up planning and/or reuse planning for at least four properties.

The project term is three years, beginning October 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2022.

1.4 Project Goals and Benefits

The grant will be used to address constraints to Brownfield redevelopment to support community health and economic prosperity. Goals and benefits of the project will include:

- **New businesses and housing options:**

Colorado Springs: The Envision Shooks Run Economic Analysis shows that land within the Shooks Run Corridor could support 4,000 new housing units, 600,000 square feet of new office space, and 100,000 square feet of new commercial space.

City of Fountain: US Highway 85 (URA) Corridor Development Gateway Redevelopment Plan was developed to halt the continuing pattern of deterioration and propose redevelopment strategies to engage local and regional interests. Located at the US 85/I-25 Interchange (exit 128), it represents a mature transportation corridor and is the southernmost entrance into an active downtown for the City of Fountain. It is bisected by I-25, representing 344 acres of fragmented ownership, mixed use properties on the east (Olde Town) and west (Gateway) areas of the Interstate. There is optimal opportunity for public and private interests for redevelopment.

For more information:

http://www.furaco.org/uploads/7/9/4/5/79452730/us_85_gateway_summary.pdf

- **Job creation:** The level of development described in the bullet above would promote job growth in and around the project focus areas.

- **Increased property values:**

Colorado Springs: The Catalyst Campus business accelerator focused on the aerospace and defense industries provides a useful case study. In 2016, the Campus opened on a former Corridor brownfield. In 2020 the revitalized Campus will generate \$4900/acre in property tax. The salvage yards dotting the Confluence area each will generate less than \$1,000/acre in 2020.

City of Fountain: The largest parcel in the Fountain Creek Bank site (currently a construction yard) generates less than \$100/acre in tax revenue.

- **Spur further investment:** this potential has been demonstrated in the Corridor where revitalization of the Catalyst Campus site recently inspired a developer to purchase the vacant Gazette Building for mixed-use redevelopment.
- **Legacy Loop Greenway:** grant funds will move the Loop toward completion by supporting Destination Elements and increasing investment in trail and infrastructure improvements.
- **Creek Health:** grant funds will support brownfield redevelopment and creek infrastructure projects that will stabilize the creeks, reduce stormwater flow and flood risk and transform the creek from a degraded drainage ditch to a healthy and welcoming community amenity.
- **Fountain Urban Renewal Authority (FURA):** The City of Fountain formed FURA in 2008 by establishing the US85 URA. FURA has spearheaded several master plan initiatives to revitalize the community's under-served assets through an offering of partnership programs and sole-source project capacity funding. FURA strives to cultivate a quality sense of place through its pursuance of brownfield redevelopment. For more information: <http://www.furaco.org/project-overview.html>.

1.5 Project Stakeholders

Stakeholders most likely to be directly engaged in the project will be brownfield property owners, business owners, and residents within the Colorado Springs Shooks Run Creek Corridor and the City of Fountain. Because the benefits of the project are intended to impact the broader community, outreach will include both those anticipated to be directly and indirectly involved. The Coalition and the Brownfield Advisory Committee (Section 2.0) will evaluate the most effective outreach techniques throughout the project as specific properties are identified for revitalization assistance.

2.0 COALITION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

2.1 Coalition Partner Team

The City of Colorado Spring is responsible for all administrative and programmatic tasks associated with this project and will also lead the Coalition's community involvement process. Aaron Egbert is designated as the Project Manager. Coalition partner leads will represent the interests of their jurisdictions, identify members to serve on a Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC), and will assist with community involvement throughout the grant term. Coalition partner leads are listed below.

Coalition Partner Team			
Coalition Partner	Name	Title	Contact Information
City of Colorado Springs	Aaron Egbert	Senior Civil Engineer	Aaron.Egbert@coloradosprings.gov
City of Colorado Springs	Chelsea Gaylord	Senior Economic Development Specialist	Chelsea.gaylord@coloradosprings.gov
City of Colorado Springs	Jennifer Vance	Grants Manager	Jennifer.vance@coloradosprings.gov
Colorado Springs Utilities	Tyrone Johnson	Business Development Manager	tyjohnson@csu.org
Colorado Springs Utilities	Michelle Wills-Hill	Environmental Specialist	mwillshill@csu.org
School District 11	Terry Johns	Senior Project Manager	Terrence.johns@d11.org
City of Fountain	Kimberly Bailey	Economic Development/Urban Renewal	kbailey@fountaincolorado.org

2.2 Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC)

Reflecting best practices of programmatic EPA brownfields assessment grant projects, the Coalition has formed a BAC that will meet on a quarterly basis. Additional meetings may be held, as needed, to further the project and the work of the Coalition Partner Team.

BAC Roles:

- Guide project direction and ensure that the views and goals of the community are incorporated into project decisions.
- Ensure equitable funding throughout the Coalition and completion of project goals in the 3-year timeline.

BAC Activities:

- Attend quarterly meetings and outreach events
- Help develop criteria for selection of sites for grant assistance
- Review Public Involvement Plan
- Help identify opportunity sites

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- Weigh in on equitable allocation of funding
- Voice local priorities and goals
- Assist with outreach to local community

Brownfield Advisory Committee			
Focus Area	Name	Title/Contact Information	Organization
Shooks Run Community	Joe Barrera	Envision Shooks Run Steering Committee Member	Colorado Springs Black/Latino Coalition
Fountain Community Member	Abby Ortega, P.E.	Manager, Water Resources	Colorado Springs Utilities
School District 11	Mary Jean Mauzy	Consultant	MJ Research & Consulting
Colorado Springs Utilities Board Member	Jill Gaebler	Councilmember	City of Colorado Springs
Critical Partner	Bill Banks	Executive Director	Fountain Creek Watershed District
Critical Partner	Len Kendall	Director of Planning and Mobility	Colorado Springs Downtown Partnership
El Paso County Representative	Craig Dossey	Executive Director	El Paso County Planning & Community Development
Land Planner	Chris Leiber	Principal	NES
Environmental Expert	John Harness	Environmental Specialist	Terracon
Developer	Toby Gannett	Advisor	Independent

3.0 OUTREACH APPROACHES AND EVENTS

Public outreach activities will be on-going throughout the 3-year duration of the project. Brief descriptions of the general meeting types are provided below with a table providing guidance on the frequency and approximate timing of outreach activities. **Given the impacts of COVID-19 on public gatherings, the Coalition will hold virtual meetings until outreach can be conducted safely and in compliance with state and local laws and guidelines.**

3.1 Public Meetings and Engagement

Public meetings and outreach events are an opportunity to educate the community about the brownfield program, provide project updates, and engage the community in gathering focused input on goals and actions. The Coalition anticipates holding at least one public meeting/outreach event per year.

The Coalition will prepare and circulate an invitation and agenda at least three weeks before each event. The invitations will be posted at Coalition member offices and circulated by Coalition members and the BAC. Each agenda will state the purpose and goals of the meeting, the desired outcomes, and the stakeholders involved.

3.2 Targeted Stakeholder Meetings

The Coalition and BAC will identify stakeholders such as brownfield property owners, real estate brokers, developers, business associations, and neighborhood groups for focused conversations about brownfield revitalization opportunities. These meetings which will enhance community knowledge of brownfield issues and identify potential brownfield sites while addressing and incorporating needs and desires of the community in project decision making. This process will also serve to gather detailed input on community perceptions of local area strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to guide brownfield revitalization efforts.

Meeting	Purposes	Estimated Meeting Frequency
Public Meetings & Engagement	Share information on grant purpose and availability of funding assistance. Provide mechanisms for input by public (nomination forms, direct contact with project leads, activities).	Bi-Annual
Targeted Stakeholder Sessions	Obtain input from stakeholders with knowledge and investment in brownfield revitalization in the project focus areas. Targeted stakeholders will be identified by the Coalition partner team and the BAC. Examples may include residents, business owners, real estate brokers, lenders, developers, and other brownfield revitalization stakeholders.	Three sessions during grant term

In addition to the meetings listed above, Coalition Partner Team and BAC members will look for opportunities to give project presentations at ongoing community organization meetings. Example meetings include Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, business associations, and rotary clubs. Coalition partners and BAC members will also work with their existing networks to leverage outreach opportunities. For example, School District 11 may coordinate outreach to students and their families through art and science activities, as recommended by appropriate District 11 staff. Coalition and BAC members will report these ad-hoc outreach activities to the City of Colorado Springs Project Manager, Aaron Egbert, to document the project's outreach efforts

4.0 OUTREACH METHODS AND TOOLS

4.1 Distribution List

The Coalition will use existing stakeholder outreach information from related initiatives such as Envision Shooks Run and the US85 URA to develop a project information/announcement distribution list. The Coalition will supplement this distribution list by providing opportunities to opt-in to the distribution list by signing up at events and using a sign-up tool on the project webpage.

4.2 Press Releases

The Coalition will prepare and circulate press releases to local newspapers to encourage coverage of project details. Press releases will also occur in advance of public meetings and/or specific project milestones.

4.3 Brownfield Fact Sheets

The Coalition will prepare at least 2 fact sheets for distribution to various community stakeholders. The fact sheets will:

- Be published in English, Spanish and, if a need is identified, in other languages utilized by community members;
- Use plain, non-technical language
- Include contact info for the Coalition Project Manager(s)

Fact sheet content will:

- Define the term "brownfield"
- Describe project elements and objectives
- Explain general brownfield terminology and issues (question/answer format)
- Inform property owners and other stakeholder about the benefits and services offered by the program

4.4 Online Outreach

Project Webpages

A webpage containing information about the project will be prepared and updated regularly with project updates and links to broader information about brownfield assessment, cleanup plans, and redevelopment. The webpage will be housed on the City of Colorado Springs website. Coalition members may also prepare project-related webpages or provide links to organization websites on the City of Colorado Springs webpage.

The City of Colorado Springs webpage will include the following elements:

- Information about the project, including the EPA logo and Coalition partner logos
- General information about brownfields
- Timeline of project activities
- Meetings information, status updates, and news
- Project fact sheets
- A webform to allow community members to join the email distribution list
- A link to send comments, questions, or inquiries to the Colorado Springs Coalition Project Manager
- Access to a downloadable Site Nomination Form that can be used to apply for participation in the program

E-Newsletters and Blogs

Coalition Partners and the BAC will share project news on regularly occurring electronic newsletters and blogs.

Social Media

Coalition Partners and the BAC will share project news and announcements via social media pages such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and NextDoor.

4.5 Direct Mailer

The Coalition may mail information (a letter or flyer) to a limited number of local addresses in targeted areas informed by the brownfield inventory. Mailer information may also be distributed to neighborhood associations through association newsletters in neighborhoods located near potential brownfields, or other available methods/tools.

4.6 Site Nomination Form

The Coalition will develop a site nomination form to solicit suggestions from property owners, developers, and community members regarding sites for potential grant assistance. Community members may nominate any brownfield property. Property owner participation in the process is entirely voluntary. A link to the nomination form will be available on the City of Colorado Springs project webpage and hard copy forms will be available at outreach events and from project contacts.